Panel Probes Ruby's Calls to Alleged Crime Figures

Washington — (AP) — House investigators are exploring why Jack Ruby telephoned at least five alleged crime syndicate figures during the weeks preceding the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

The House Select Committee on Assassinations is investigating whether Kennedy's assassination was the product of a conspiracy, possibly involving the crime syndicates that were the target of a Justice Department crackdown under Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

The Warren Commission concluded that there was no conspiracy, that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in killing Kennedy and that Ruby acted alone when he shot Oswald to death in the Dallas police station. Kennedy was slain in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963, and Oswald was murdered two days later.

Some commission critics have alleged that Ruby had crime syndicate ties, suggesting a possible underworld plot against Kennedy.

Earl Ruby told the committee yesterday that his brother insisted to his death that he acted alone and on an impulse when he killed Oswald. Jack Ruby was convicted of murder and sentenced to death, but the verdict was overturned and he was awaiting a new trial when he died of cancer in January 1967.

Committee chief counsel Robert Blakey said investigators analyzed Ruby's long-distance telephone records and discovered a "dramatic upsurge in calls in October and November 1963."

Many of the 171 calls Ruby made then dealt with labor troubles at his Dallas nightclub, Blakey reported.

He said investigators determined that 13 phone calls involved these alleged crime figures:

— Lewis J. McWillie, who "was working in an organized-crime-controlled casino" in Havana in 1959, a committee report said. Earl Ruby testified that his brother considered McWillie a close friend and visited him in Havana that year.

— Irwin S. Weiner, described by the committee as "a prominent bondsman in Chicago." Law enforcement records show Weiner allegedly "served as a key functionary in the longtime relationship between the Chicago Mafia and various corrupt union officials, particularly during (Jimmy) Hoffa's reign as president of the Teamsters Union," the committee report said.

— Nofia Pecora, also known as Joseph Pecoraro. In 1963 he operated a New Orleans trailer park, and the committee report described him as "a former heroin smuggler" and close associate of Carlos Marcello, then the syndicate boss of Texas and Louisiana.

— Robert G. (Barney) Baker, a Hoffa lieutenant. Robert Kennedy once wrote that Baker's mere presence in a room "was enough to silence the men who would otherwise have opposed Hoffa's reign." The Senate Rackets Committee in the late 1950s said Baker was Hoffa's liaison to Mafia leaders.

— Murray W. (Dusty) Miller, another pro-Hoffa Teamsters leader. The committee report said he "was associated with numerous underworld figures."

Blakey said yesterday that the committee investigators have been unable to determine "the ultimate meaning of these facts and circumstances" concerning Ruby's contacts with the men.